

## Testimony in support of H.B. 6355, an Act Concerning Risk Protection Orders

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, ranking members Kissel and Fishbein and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Karen Edwards. I live in Stamford. I am a member of Connecticut Against Gun Violence. I am a parent, a Professor of Public Health and Adjunct Professor of Pediatrics, and a retired physician/ public health professional.

I am testifying in **support of H.B. 6355 *An Act Concerning a Risk Protection Order or Warrant***, to strengthen Connecticut's Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) gun removal law.

I am a gun safety advocate because, from my perspectives as a parent, a physician, and a public health professional, I know that the evidence shows that many deaths of adults, children and teens (through accidental discharge, suicide and gun violence) can be prevented without infringing on the rights of law-abiding citizens who choose to own guns.

The proposed legislation, HB-6355, modifies Connecticut General Statute Sec 29-38c the extreme risk law for issuing "risk warrants" to remove firearms from individuals deemed to be at risk of imminent personal injury to self or others. The proposed legislation would prevent deaths due to mass shootings, other gun homicides and gun suicides. Up to two-thirds of CT gun deaths are by suicide. Firearm suicide is the second leading cause of suicide in CT. Extreme Risk Protection Orders are an effective last-resort means to temporarily remove guns from someone at imminent risk of suicide. As reported in a 2017 Duke/Yale/UConn [study](#)<sup>1</sup>, for every 10 to 20 risk protection orders issued in Connecticut, one suicide is prevented. Two risk protection orders were issued in CT in 2019, for individuals who threatened mass shootings, one in Stafford and one in Norwalk, demonstrating how ERPOs protect the public from potential mass shootings.

The proposed HB-6355 includes three modifications:

- **Require a court hearing to demonstrate that the risk of imminent harm no longer exists before firearms are returned.** Right now, at-risk persons can just request that their firearms be returned when the order expires.
- **Allow a risk protection order to prohibit an individual from buying a firearm** if that person is at risk of imminent harm to self or others and has shown an interest in or intent to acquire a firearm, even if s/he doesn't currently possess one. Currently, ERPOs can only be issued against someone who is currently in possession of a gun.
- **Allow family, household members and healthcare professionals to directly petition the court for a risk protection order.** Currently only law enforcement and states' attorneys can do so. Twelve states allow family members to petition the courts directly; three states allow some categories of medical professionals to do so.

---

<sup>1</sup> Yale, Duke, UConn researchers: Gun-seizure law prevents suicides, Yale School of Medicine, Nov 28, 2016

Claims that ERPO laws violate due process have no merit. According to the Giffords Law Center, no court has invalidated an extreme risk protection order or risk-warrant law. Courts in Connecticut, Indiana, and Florida that have heard challenges to extreme risk protection order or risk-warrant laws have held that the laws do not violate the due process rights of respondents and/or are constitutional under the Second Amendment. In addition, there is no evidence that ERPOs are abused by family members.

I ask that you favorably report HB-6355 out of committee so that the General Assembly can vote to strengthen our Extreme Risk Protection law so that it works harder to prevent firearm suicide and homicide. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Karen Edwards MD MPH  
Stamford CT